MISSILE DEFENSE AGENCY

News Release

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ABL Completes First Live Target Tracking Tests

The Missile Defense Agency announced today that the prototype Airborne Laser aircraft successfully completed its first two tracking tests against boosting missile targets over the Pacific Ocean on June 6 and June 13, respectively. The first test came only seven weeks after the aircraft returned to flight, and follows nearly a year of aircraft and system modifications, including the installation of its megawatt-class chemical laser.

These tests mark the first time ABL has demonstrated a complete low-power engagement sequence against a boosting target, in this case a ground-launched Terrier-Lynx missile. The missile was launched from San Nicolas Island, located in the Naval Air Warfare Center-Weapons Division Sea Range, off the central California coast.

After detecting the missile with its on-board sensors, ABL tracked the target and compensated for atmospheric distortions prior to firing a low-power laser to simulate the megawatt-class laser that will be used in later tests. Plans call for ABL to engage progressively more difficult targets in coming months, culminating with a lethal demonstration against a boosting threat-representative ballistic missile target later this year.

The ABL is an element of the Missile Defense Agency's plan to develop technologies that could be used in the future to engage ballistic missiles in their ascent phase.

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